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ESTONIA NOT TO GRANT ASYLUM TO HIGHJACKER. The Estonian government on 19 January decided it will not grant political asylum to Vladimir Bozhko, BNS reported on 20 January. The 36-year-old locksmith from Vorkuta hijacked a Russian plane from Syktyvkar to St. Petersburg in mid-November, demanding to be flown to Denmark. After the plane landed in Tallinn, he surrendered peacefully and released all the passengers and crew. When Russia asked for Bozhko's extradition on 25 November, he requested asylum and threatened to kill himself if turned over to Russia. Estonia is deciding when and how to transfer Bozhko to Russia. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

FURTHER TALKS ON BALTIC EU ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP. Deputy Foreign Minister Albinas Januskas, heading the Lithuanian delegation to the first round of talks on associate membership in the European Union, described the 19 January meeting as "successful," BNS reported on 20 January. The two sides exchanged opinions on the draft association agreement proposed by the European Commission. An Estonian delegation, headed by Foreign Ministry Deputy Chancellor Priit Kolbre, held similar talks on 20 January. Estonian Ambassador to Brussels Clyde Kull noted that the draft agreement's provisions on the movement of the work force, the transfer of social insurance, and the setting up of businesses needed additional work, BNS reported on 21 January. Estonia's major concern--the date of possible full membership in the EU--was not discussed. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.